

*Preservation is Progress
...may we be worthy stewards...*

Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume 4, Issue 2, Number 9

Spring 2006

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), Patron, and Regular levels.
- **PBA and Patron** levels include a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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*We have 10 PBA,
64 Patron, and
9 Regular members,
and will send this Newsletter
to 133 households.*



*Our continuing story on the Great River begins
on page 4. Cover painting by Ralph A. Osborn.*

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The President's message



So many of the Chautauquas across the country have a rich history of celebrating the arts. Early program books tell of traveling people who came to sing, lecture, play musical instruments, and so on. In 1903, Prof. J. R. Buckingham of the Brooklyn Art Guild conducted

the Art School at Chautauqua. Classes were held in a tent on the banks of the Mississippi. Buckingham's paintings of local scenery were exhibited in the Auditorium, and were for sale. Unfortunately, we don't know of the whereabouts of any of his work.

Ralph Osborn was an important person in our later history, and his paintings tell us much about daily life in our community. I remember one summer morning when Ralph sponsored a painting demonstration, and many of us gathered around him near the Administration Building. His topic was "painting a blue sky." Sue Schaeffer was the lucky person who took home that painting.

Next time you are in the Town Hall, look closely at Ralph's painting of the balloon ascension, the painting on the cover of this issue. Notice the detail of the harbor, the people, and the balloons. Take the time also to look at Mark Hurd's digital art painting of the Chautauqua Inn, also in the Town Hall. Both Osborn's and Hurd's work will be featured on the Artists' Stroll, scheduled for Friday, June 16, at 7 pm.

Of course, our interest in the arts continues to this day. The Yellow Balloon, once Chautauqua's grocery store, is a special place for creating in a number of arts media—paint, clay, and so on. It's a place that attracts Chautauquans of all ages, with classes held throughout the summer. Each summer an Art Fair displays the work of the people of Chautauqua. So, if we think of art as history, every season adds to our knowledge and understanding of life at New Piasa Chautauqua.

We're dedicated to preserving this history, and we believe "preservation is progress." All members of the Historical Society are partners in this important activity, and we appreciate your support as members. Your dues pay the bills for the Newsletter, the programs we sponsor, and our projects, especially the Archival Restoration and Conservation project of the last few years. It's renewal time...please rejoin!

ROSE Tomlinson

Errata

One neat thing about having an error pointed out is you have proof that someone has read the material. We are indebted to **Dan Drescher** for pointing out that in our article on *Summer Rest* (November 2005, page 6, second column) we stated erroneously that "Brown Gables" was today's Kirsch's cottage. It is in fact the Dan and Sharon Drescher cottage. Thank you, Dan.

The **cover painting** by Ralph A. Osborn (Oil on canvas, *untitled*, 24" x 14", no date) was owned originally by Otto and Naomi Huff. The Huff family donated it to the L.C.I.A., and it has hung in the Town Hall for the past several years. The photo image is used with permission of the L.C.I.A.

PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS

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The mission and purpose of the *Chautauqua Historical Society* is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqui, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.

The 2006 Season's Piasa Bluff Assembly Events

We think it's useful to remind all Chautauquans that, in the first two decades or so of our community existence, the season actually meant an "Assembly" period of from two to four weeks. It was during this period that the major program events of the summer were scheduled. The programs reflected the mission and objectives of our Chautauqua and the national movement: religion, education, science, and family recreation.

We have worked closely with Katie Schaeffer and the Program Committee in developing and scheduling a group of programs for 2006 which we describe collectively as **Piasa Bluffs Assembly** programs. They will be listed in the 2006 Program Book, and further information will be provided in a timely manner through the Chautauqua Channels. We are grateful to Katie Schaeffer for her patience, cooperation and assistance, and to Mary Roberts who has the difficult task of translating the requests of many people into a Program Book. Thank you, Katie and Mary.

Here's our lineup, as best we know it:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| July 2–July 9 | Opening of a week-long exhibition on Tent Life at Chautauqua, featuring a life-size tent and accoutrements, in the Auditorium Grove. |
| July 9 | CHS "Show and Tell," display and discussion of cottage photos and documents in the Town Hall at 7 pm, bring your own materials. |
| July 12 | Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) book review meeting starting at 10:45 am, Pink Geranium Terrace, <i>Lapham Rising</i> by Roger Rosenblatt, a New York Chautauqua CLSC 2006 Season selection., bring your own lunch. |
| July 16 | Fourth Annual Chautauqua Platform Lecture, Regional Landscapes and painters, presented by Dr. Julie Dunn-Morton, Woodcock Curator of American Art, St. Louis Mercantile Library, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Town Hall or Auditorium, 7 pm. |
| July 20 | CLSC presentation, "Music and the River," featuring local composer Jean King and her compositions, Pink Geranium Terrace, 10:45 am, bring a brown bag lunch. |
| August 6 | CLSC film, "Maybeck at Principia," describing the all-campus plan for Principia College by nationally renowned architect Bernard Maybeck, Town Hall, 7 pm. |
| August 13 | CLSC slide presentation (Power Point), "The Faces of Mexico: Its Art and People," Tim Tomlinson, Town Hall, 7 pm. |

Frederick Oakes Sylvester Addenda

We had a lot of positive comments about the Winter 2006 Newsletter and its **Great River** article featuring Frederick Oakes Sylvester. Thanks for taking the time to let us know you enjoyed it.

There are two additions we'd like to make for the record. First, we said we could find no record of Sylvester having visited Chautauqua, even though he spent about a dozen summers in his cottage on the bluffs just west of Elsay. But it would have been strange indeed if he had never visited our community. Lucy Semple Ames, who owned the estate which is now the central campus of Principia, was an occasional visitor to Chautauqua, and Sylvester knew her and painted on her property. We "have deduced" some indirect evidence of a connection.. We know William Jennings Bryan visited our Chautauqua at least twice before 1910, and a Bryan visit would have been a most memorable moment for our region. In the Paul Williams book (*Frederick Oakes Sylvester: The Artist's Encounter with Elsay*) many of you received from CHS, Williams notes that Sylvester's book of art and poetry, *The Great River*, was printed in 1911, a special edition of only 125 copies. Sylvester gave one of this very limited printing to William Jennings Bryan as a gift. How did he know Bryan? In "footnoting" this happening, William cites a book on Chautauqua history published in 1974. When we checked the relevant footnote in that book, the only fact cited is that Bryan visited Chautauqua several times. Now, historians deal in hypotheses, knowing you can't know everything absolutely. Given that, it's logical to believe that Sylvester, having gifted something as important as his book to Bryan, had to have known Bryan and that Chautauqua would be a likely/reasonable place for the two men to have met. What do you think?

The second "addition" also derives from the William's book, and is testimony to the great love Frederick Oakes Sylvester had for the Mississippi and our region. After his passing in 1915, appropriate funeral services were held in St. Louis, the city in which he lived and worked for over 20 years. Then, in accordance with his wishes, his family and friends journeyed up the river until they reached the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois, just two miles above our community's shores, and scattered his ashes over the waters he loved so well.

The Great River as inspiration

The Mississippi is long and often wide, with great stretches of scenic beauty. It is a powerful economic force, creating cities, towns, and villages along its path that draw energy from its presence. It is a powerful natural force. So, when a group of regional Methodists looked for a site for a *Western Chautauqua* in 1885, the Great River was an ideal choice for its location. The river provided transportation and recreation. It also provided a significant source of inspiration for our founders and others, including painters such as Frederick Oakes Sylvester who found beauty in its everyday changing moods.

We should expect art to be, in a cultural community such as our Chautauqua, an important part of our collective history. In the *Piasa Bluffs Assembly* days, the program often included the equivalent of "summer classes," with instruction in art as part of the curriculum. For example, the 1903 program hired an art instructor from New York.

The region changed slowly but surely as the 20th century moved forward. Chautauqua changed as well. Still, there was always a cadre of artists who kept in our mind's eye the charm, value and staying power of the Great River and its surroundings, especially the valley that provides the setting for New Piasa Chautauqua. These artists embody the ideal of *ars longa*.

Highly placed in this cadre is **Ralph A. Osborn** (1903-1998). He graduated from Alton High School in 1923, and from the University of Illinois in 1933 at the height of the Great Depression. He later earned a Master's at Butler University. Osborn coached school sports, was a music teacher, and later a school superintendent. When he left the classroom and school board meeting rooms, he entered the field of education publishing, with Laidlaw Brothers, where he worked for over a decade.

To state that Osborn was a "long-time Chautauquan" is to make the point that some clichés are intrinsically true and undeniable. He published *A Centennial: The History of New Piasa Chautauqua, 1885-1895*, in 1989, at the age of eighty-six. It was a work of enormous community import, recording and documenting where possible the events of our early history, describing who came to Chautauqua and what they were seeking, and how a self-governing community maintained its independence and sense of identity in a changing world.

An *Alton Telegraph* article (11-15-86) spoke of him as "courting many muses." In courting Clio, the muse

of history, Osborn had our Chautauqua in mind: "The principles for which it (Chautauqua) stands are religion,



Ralph A. Osborn, *untitled* Oil on canvas, 18" x 24", no date. Photo reproduction used with permission of Don and Lyn Bryant.

education, and science presented in a recreational setting...I think it's worthwhile to preserve and it can best be done by people being aware of their heritage so they can make the right decisions. By writing the book, I'm striving for a better educated person and a lasting community." (*Telegraph*, 3-16-89)

Osborn pursued art simultaneously, and for that we are also indebted. He painted many a day in many a season in the 1970s and 80s, recording on canvas his recollections of yesterday and impressions of his present-day Chautauqua. Osborn shared with Frederick Oakes Sylvester a love of the Great River. Both painted its majesty in broad strokes, capturing the wonder of the palisades, its limestone bluffs. But where Oakes blotted out everything but the river, Osborn exulted in its activity—the steamboats, the people.

We have no idea how many canvases Ralph Osborn produced since there is unfortunately no record. However, it's clear, we believe, his art serves the same purposes as his *Centennial*, a concern for preservation and the importance of continuity.

Christine Hagin came to Chautauqua with her husband Dave and two daughters Jenny and Becky in the early 1980s. Chris brought enthusiasm, organization, and talent to a newly reorganized Chautauqua. She helped create the Junior Girls' Club, served on the board of directors for NPC, and more recently has been active in the Historical Society as a member of its Board and a leader in Jersey Door activities.

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Hagin's art is regionalist and of the "local color" school in that she brings to life community structures in her watercolors. If one thinks of the Great River as both "means" and "ends," then Hagin provides us with a glimpse of how men, women and children created a set



Bluff Avenue, circa 1911 photograph, courtesy of Daniel Zimmerman, CHS Archives.

of structures (means) to complement the richness of the River, and how we all fit and blend in with the River and with one another (ends). Her view of Bluff Avenue, the area changed only slightly from the photo of almost 100 years ago, promotes the principles of preservation



Christine Hagin, *untitled*, Watercolor, 11" x 17", no date, reproduced with permission of Christine Hagin.

and continuity as does her view of St. Louis Circle from the north side of the Auditorium. Where the Great River is awesome and often breath-taking, the community is charming, even quaint. It's the combination that makes it all special. It takes the talent and insight of someone like Chris Hagin to remind us of just how special a space we occupy along the Great River.

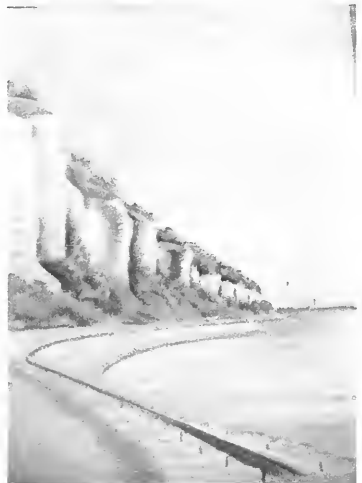
Painting may not be exactly a cottage industry in our region, but it is certainly alive and well in



Christine Hagin, *untitled*, Watercolor, 15" x 11", no date, reproduced with permission of Christine Hagin

Chautauqua and neighboring Elsie. A group of folks get together in Elsie on a fairly regular basis, sometimes twice a month, to paint and support one another and critique each other's work. The group includes Chris Hagin and Rose Tomlinson, Elsie's mayor, Marge Doerr, Lynn Schreiber, retired Principia art professor Jim Schmidt, and also June Cronin, who has painted Elsie scenes for several decades. June's daughter, **Rosemary Towey**, is also part of this Elsie group. Towey is an important chronicler of the Great River. She taught art at Jerseyville High School for many years and is now active in the Madison County Arts Council and the Jacoby Arts Center in Alton. Her work is exhibited widely in the area, and she has become interested recently in Chautauqua as a focus for her art.

Towey adds the road to the river, another dimension to the world of sky, water and stately bluffs.



Rosemary Towey, *Great River Road*, Pastel, 28" x 23", 2005., reproduced with permission

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A Jewish Chautauqua?

Oxymoron? Contradiction? Cultural ecumenicism? All of the above? None of the above? Some of the above? You choose.

The word *chautauqua* is most likely an anglicized interpretation of a Native American/Iroquoian word. It certainly has no Christian connotation, no Jewish connotation, and no Judeo-Christian connotation. However, it has come to identify a late 19th century cultural, social, and yes, religious movement of which our New Piasa Chautauqua has been a part since 1885. The first "Chautauqua" (New York, 1874) grew from the Methodist Sunday School movement. Other early chautauquas were also connected directly to American Protestantism: Lakeside, Ohio (Methodist, 1873), Monteagle, Tennessee (Methodist, 1882), Thousand Island Park, New York (Methodist 1875), and Ocean Park, Maine (Free Will Baptist, 1881). One notable Chautauqua had no direct religious affiliation—Boulder, Colorado (1898). And yes, there was a Jewish Chautauqua.

Rabbi Henry Berkowitz (1857-1924) is credited with founding the Jewish organization. He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and enrolled originally as a student at Cornell University. He left Cornell for the new Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati to enter the religious life, and was a graduate of that school's first class. His early duties included congregations in Mobile, Alabama; Kansas City, Missouri; and finally, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, his last post.



Berkowitz photo taken from the Internet files of The Jewish Chautauqua Society, New York, NY.

Berkowitz actively promoted social causes. When in Mobile he was involved in The Humane Movement for the protection of Children and Animals from

Cruelty, and in Kansas City was active in charities and corrections projects. He helped found the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in Philadelphia, and was a vice president of the Universal Peace Union. He founded the Jewish Chautauqua Society in Philadelphia in 1893.

Berkowitz signed agreements with the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle that authorized him to use the "Chautauqua System" of education, and he quickly organized "courses of study," study groups (circles), and began publishing materials. He was encouraged at the highest level. Chautauqua founder Bishop John Vincent Heyl invited Berkowitz to lecture at the "Mother Chautauqua." A summer Assembly in Atlantic City, New Jersey opened in 1897 and became an annual event. The Assembly had a teaching-training component for teachers in Jewish religious schools. The Jewish Chautauqua Society was incorporated under Pennsylvania law in 1899. Its mission statement embraced "the dissemination of knowledge of the Jewish religion by fostering the study of its history and literature, giving popular courses of instruction, issuing publications, establishing reading circles, holding general assemblies, and by such other means as may from time to time be found necessary and proper." The Jewish Chautauqua Society continues to flourish today.

CLSC Book List, 2006, Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY

The reading list for the CLSC 2006 Season is:

The Dream Life of Sukhanov

by Olga Grushin

Lapham Rising: A Novel

by Roger Rosenblatt

Upton Sinclair: Radical Innocent

by Anthony Arthur

Outside the Not So Big House: Creating the Landscape of Home

by Julie Moir Messervy

The Winds of Change: Climate, Weather and the Destruction of Civilizations

by Eugene Linden

March

by Geraldine Brooks

Natasha and Other Stories

by David Bezmozgis

Poems to Live By in Troubled Times

by Joan Murray

Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy

by Louise W. Knight

In Memoriam

Our community was saddened by the loss this past "interseason" of three well known and well loved Chautauquans: Lynn Schlansker, Tim Timmermeier, and Larry "Red" White.

Lynn Schlansker (1910-2006) was a Chautauquan in body, mind, and spirit. He was born and educated in nearby Grafton, worked in the Brainerd Store (now the Yellow Balloon) in the 1920s, where he met Carolyn Schoemaker whom he would marry in 1937. He operated the Midway in 1930, and graduated from the University of Illinois in 1933. The Schlanskers moved a number of times for business reasons, living in St. Louis, Kansas City, Alton, University City, and St. Charles. They became "full-time" Chautauquans with their sons, David and Gary, in 1953, spending every summer in our community since that year. Lynn was on the Chautauqua Board for twenty years, three years as president. In the 1980s, along with the reorganization of New Piasa Chautauqua, the New Piasa Chautauqua Church Assembly was established, and Lynn was the first president of that group. Lynn counted many Chautauquans as his friends, especially Red White. Beginning with his work at Brainerd's in 1925, Lynn Schlansker could speak of being a Chautauquan for eighty-one years.

Tim Timmermeier (1929-2006) was a familiar sight on the Chautauqua grounds. He and Winnie purchased the cottage of Arch and Mildred Trabue in 1973, and named it "Winnie-the-Pooh." He was a Navy veteran, serving in the Korean War, and always proud to stand with other Navy veterans on July 4 nights in the Auditorium. Tim graduated from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville in 1961, and worked as a supervisor at Laclede Steel for over forty years. Like so many Chautauquans, he answered the "call" to service on the Chautauqua Board of Directors, and was president of the Board in 1979 and 1980, a critical time in Chautauqua history because of the reorganization process then underway. More recently, Tim was a volunteer on various committees, always a strong supporter of bettering the Chautauqua community. He will be remembered by many.

Larry "Red" White (1912-2006) grew up in rural Tennessee and went on to graduate from West Point in 1933. Then a young officer, he married Elizabeth Jane (Sue) Flint in 1937. It is Susan Flint White who is Red's connection to Chautauqua. Sue's parents purchased the leasehold on #2 Springfield in 1929 and named the cottage "Grandview." The original leasehold was issued in 1892, secured by Piasa Bluffs Assembly stock. Red and Susan took over the leasehold in 1964, and "Grandview" is still held by

the White family. Red White served in the Second World War, an Infantry Regimental Commander in the Pacific, where he received the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster) and Bronze Star for Valor. He joined the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947, and during his tenure with the CIA earned additional commendations. He retired from service in 1975, and moved to Vero Beach, Florida, spending summers at Chautauqua. His book, *Red, White, and Blue* tells the story of his life and his commitment to country and family.

2006 Memorial Flag Schedule

We will continue to fly the memorial flags of Chautauqua veterans in the 2006 season, a growing tradition in our community in the 21st. century. The flags will be raised and lowered by volunteer members of the Chautauqua Veterans

Flag Detail, coordinated by Chuck Bryant. Members have included Gary Cooper, Bob Edmunds, Dave Hagin, Larry Colbert, Don Bryant, Carl Raab, Joe Laffler, Bob Street, and Tim Timmermeier, who recently passed away.

The season's schedule is as follows:

May 28	Raise the flag, Marcia Drescher
June 18	Jim Thatcher
July 4	William Clarkson
July 16	Frank Nickols
August 13	Jack Hornell
September 4	Retreat the flag



Chautauqua Golf Scholars

The second semester Chautauqua Golf Scholars for 2005-06 are: **Nick Allen**, grandson of Bob and Nancy Cuiferi, **Matthew Crider**, grandson of Jack Crider, **Jessica Rutledge**, granddaughter of John and Ann Rutledge, and **Jillian Winters**, daughter of Dan and Rhea Winters.

A committee of Barbara Becker, Jenny Rausch, Rick Ross, Tim Tomlinson, and Jim Whiteley selected a total of eight scholars this year. The Golf Classic and the Society will raise funds and award a similar number of prizes in 2006-07.

Continued from page 5

Here we are at the beginning of the 21st century, still captivated by and trying to capture the world of the Great River and our Chautauqua community's relationship to it. **Mark Hurd** "grew up" in Chautauqua, lives in St. Louis, works as a graphic artist, and spends as much time at Chautauqua with his two children as he possibly can. He recalls roaming the grounds as a youngster, and particularly remembers seeing Ralph Osborn painting, and watching as Ralph put his ideas of Chautauqua on canvas.

Where other artists experiment with different media for painting—oils, watercolor, pastels, charcoal, and so on, Hurd works with the camera and the computer keyboard. He says his work begins with a photograph, and rejects an often heard complaint that



Hurd, *Playground Bridge, 1908*, digital art, multi-dimensional, 2002, used with permission



Mark Hurd, *Season's Greetings*, digital art, multi-dimensional, 2001, reproduced with permission of the artist

"it's not art." "Not so," he told us, "artists have been using some form of enlarging machines as far back as the Renaissance to study carefully form and structure, and to work out details."

Hurd has created more than thirty images of Chautauqua. They range from fanciful scenes from the past used as greeting cards to contemporary scenes. He has created important representations of Chautauqua's past, such as his painting of the Chautauqua Inn which was built in 1904 and which burned down in 1919. *The Inn* hangs in the Town Hall, as does the Osborn painting of Flint Park, shown on this issue's cover.

"I guess Chautauqua is my muse," he says. "We Chautauquans are so blessed to have the rich history of Chautauqua and the river, the unspoiled beauty of the valley and bluffs and the really sacred trust that all Chautauquans have to preserving that history, making sure that it remains intact for future generations. I think we take it for granted that we are located on one of the

10 Great Scenic Riverways in the U.S., and Chautauqua wouldn't exist if not for its fantastic location and the many amazing people from generations gone by who have given their time, energy, and love. I so enjoy walking through the valley and watching how the light plays or watching the hawks or turkey buzzards circling over the bluffs, to listen to see kids laughing and frolicking in the pool."

Thanks, Mark Hurd, for putting into personal and family terms what the Historical Society believes...

Preservation is Progress.



Hurd, *American Queen on the Mississippi*, digital art, multi-dimensional, no date, reproduced from a print owned by Tim and Rose Tomlinson, used with permission.

